

A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) ✓ ✓ For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.

Over 8000 entries received!

“Feel the Power ... VOTE!” Wins Slogan Contest

The winners of the Department of Defense (DoD) 1997 Voting Slogan Contest are Chief Hospital Corpsman Marisol Nieves, U.S. Navy, and Major Ricky O. Stuart, U.S. Air Force, who submitted the slogan “Feel the POWER ... VOTE!” In making the announcement, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) noted that there were more than 8,000 entries submitted from around the world, exceeding the number received for the 1995 contest by more than 3,000 entries.

Chief Nieves and Major Stuart will receive a plaque from the

Secretary of Defense for their winning slogan. The slogan will be featured in the FVAP’s 1998-99 media campaign designed to motivate more than six million citizens covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* and will also appear in the *1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide*. Second through fifth place and three Honorable Mentions were also selected by the judges and will receive plaques from the Secretary of Defense.

The second place winning slogan is “VOTE TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW!” submitted by Chief Hospital Corpsman Romualdo V. Cabal, U.S. Marine Corps; third place slogan was submitted by Staff Sergeant Maloney, U.S. Army, “Freedom Still Has Responsibility ... VOTE!”; fourth place winner was penned by Lieutenant James & Marsha Elliott, U.S. Coast Guard, “Your Honor. Your Privilege. Your Duty. Vote.” The fifth place winning slogan, “THE VOICE OF AMERICA, IS THE VOICE OF ‘YOUR’ VOTE,” was submitted by Mr. DSHON, a civilian working for the Pearl Harbor Federal Credit Union.

The three slogans selected by the judges for Honorable Mention are: (see **Contest**, pg. 2)

Illegibility of FPCA down 28%

Survey Results Indicate Success of 1995 Revision of FPCA

Results of the 1996 Post Election Survey of local election officials (LEOs) indicate that the 1995 redesign of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) contributed significantly to the decrease in problems encountered by LEOs when processing the form.

LEOs at the county, city and town level nationwide have, among many other duties, the responsibility of processing FPCA requests for registration and absentee ballots from citizens covered

by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*: members of the Uniformed Services, the merchant marine, and their family members, and all U.S. citizens overseas.

The FPCA was redesigned in 1995 to address many of the problems LEOs reported they encountered when processing the form. Chief among these: illegibility and the failure of applicants to provide a party affiliation.

The table on page 4 compares select statistics obtained from LEOs through Post Election Surveys after the general elections in 1992, 1994 and 1996. The surveys asked LEOs to identify the most frequently (see **Survey**, pg. 4)

Case began in Val Verde County, Texas

Military Absentee Voting Rights Upheld in Courts

After almost six months, the Val Verde County, Texas contested election case ended in June. Both the Federal and State court judges dismissed the cases because the plaintiffs had not shown a factual basis to challenge the residency of persons voting by absentee ballot in the Val Verde County local elections.

Plaintiffs filed suit following the November 5, 1996, general election in Val Verde County, Texas, contesting the election of the county commissioner and sheriff. The plaintiffs filed suit in both the Federal District Court and a Texas trial court challenging the absentee ballots on the grounds that some or all of the absentee voters were not residents of Texas.

In questioning the validity of 800 military absentee ballots that determined the local offices, plaintiffs’ attorneys won a preliminary injunction from Federal District Court Judge Fred Biery. The injunction prevented the elected officials from taking office until the State ruled on the legal issues of the contested election. In January, Judge Biery allowed the attorneys for the plaintiffs to send a lengthy questionnaire to the 800 absentee voters. (see **Val Verde**, p. 3)

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... and now this update

1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide in Distribution in October

The 1998-99 *Voting Assistance Guide* will be in distribution the last week of October 1997. This distribution should translate into earlier receipt than ever before by Voting Assistance Officers worldwide, enabling them to start planning for '98 elections well in advance of the primary elections.

"We wanted to distribute the *Guide* before the Holiday mail rush, and in time for our citizens to begin plans for making 1998 another outstanding year," stated Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Director Phyllis Taylor.

The FVAP makes delivery of *Guide* stock to a central distribution center in each of the Uniformed Services, Department of State, Peace Corps, Public Health Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and various other government agencies that employ or service citizens voting under the UOCAVA. While the *Guide* will ship

out from the printer's in late October, the date of actual receipt by Voting Assistance Officers will vary, depending on their organization's internal distribution method.

Detailed ordering instructions for citizens affiliated with most of the organizations above will be provided in the next issue of this newsletter. Voting Assistance Officers in overseas citizen organizations such as Democrats Abroad, Republicans Abroad and others, should contact the FVAP directly using the contact information provided below.

Alternatively, the 1998-99 edition of the *Guide* will be available on the FVAP's site on the World Wide Web at www.fvap.gov. The Web edition of the *Guide* state pages will be available at the site in early October.



Cover art work for
'98-99 *Guide*

FVAP Home Page: www.fvap.gov
FVAP e-mail: vote@fvap.gov

Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month

[] Visit the FVAP's Web site at www.fvap.gov. Check out the on-line versions of this news letter and FVAP news releases.

[] Obtain a copy of your Service or Overseas Citizen Voting Action Plan this Fall. The Plan, coordinated by this office and signed by the Secretary of Defense, contains an "action plan" for voting assistance during elections in 1998 and 1999.

[] Encourage participation in statewide and local elections in November. Consult the August newsletter or www.fvap.gov for a calendar.

[] Remind new arrivals in your area to notify their local election officials of their new mailing address. Mail delays are a major cause of disenfranchisement of citizens. The FPCA contains a small postage-paid pre-perforated post card that can be used for this purpose.

(**Contest**, from pg. 1) "Building A Nation ... One Vote At A Time" submitted by Major Maureen Massey, U.S. Air Force; "Speak Up! Speak Out! Vote!" submitted by Lynne D. Fox, the Uinta County Clerk in Evanston, Wyoming; and "DECLARE YOUR INDEPENDENCE - VOTE!" submitted by Ms. A. Patricia Cronin, the Secretary to the Consul General at the Consulate in Casablanca, Morocco. Many of the other exceptional slogan entries will be featured in Chapter 3 of the *1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide*.

In commenting on the contest, FVAP Director, Ms. Phyllis J. Taylor stated, "I extend my special thanks to all those who took the time to participate in the contest as well as to the judges who donated their time to select the winning slogans. Congratulations to all on a job well done!" The Judges were the Honorable John Warner, Chairman, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration; the Honorable Bill Thomas, Chairman, Committee on House Oversight; the Honorable Mike Cooney, Montana Secretary of State and President of the National Association of Secretaries of State; and Ms. Eva Kasten, Executive Vice President, The Advertising Council.

Federal Voting Assistance Program

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Director: Phyllis J. Taylor
Deputy Director: John G. Uschold
VIN Editor: Ricardo Rovira
Program Analyst: Pauline Brunelli
Program Analyst: Vanessa Wiggins
Program Analyst: Betty Collins

Info Systems & Services: Terrence Williams

Voting Information Center:
J. Scott Wiedmann
Computer Specialist: Chris Dorr
Database Administrator: Marilyn Reck
Executive Assistant: Sherri Morris
Administrative Assistant: Cheri Kelly



Write to:

Federal Voting Assistance Program
Rm. 1B457, The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155



Phone

(703) 695-0663
(800) 438-8683
DSN 225-0663



Fax

(703) 693-5507
DSN 223-5507

Voting Information Center

(703) 693-6500
DSN 223-6500



Internet

vote@fvap.gov

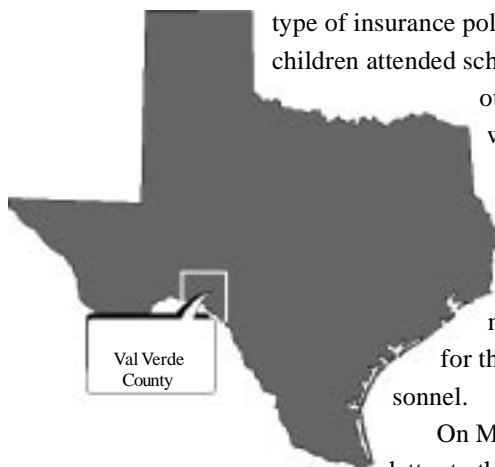
<http://www.fvap.gov>

Feel the Power ... VOTE!

—winner of the '97 Voting Slogan Contest—

Note: Copying or using VIN articles in other publications, etc. is encouraged.

(Val Verde, from pg. 1) The burdensome 21 page questionnaire asked absentee voters to describe many aspects of their private life, including whether or not they had a bank account and the address of the bank, type of insurance policy owned by the spouse, where children attended school, and where they conducted other activities normally associated with residency.



other activities normally associated with residency.

While Texas State law determines the validity of military personnel voting in local elections, the FVAP continued to monitor the case out of concern for the voting rights of military personnel.

On March 11, 1997, the FVAP sent a letter to the 800 absentee voters who were sent the court ordered questionnaire, advising them that Judge Biery had ruled during a conference on March 10 that no one need answer the questionnaire at the present time.

On June 19, Texas State District Court Judge Stephen Ables dismissed the case because the plaintiffs had not shown a factual basis to challenge the residency of persons voting by absentee ballot. Judge Ables closed his opinion with the same quote from Governor Ellis Amall of Georgia used in *Carrington v. Rush* 380 U.S. 89: "The uniform of our country . . . (must not) be the badge of disenfranchisement for the man or woman who wears it."

On June 23, Judge Biery dissolved the preliminary injunction which prevented the elected officials from taking office and concluded that the plaintiffs failed to prove their allegations that the absentee voters were improperly allowed by county officials to participate in the local elections.

On June 23, sheriff-elect D'Wayne Jernigan was sworn into office. A new county commissioner, Bradley Birch, was sworn into office shortly afterward. The county commissioner was appointed to office by Val Verde County Judge Ray Kirkpatrick to fill the vacancy created by commissioner-elect Murry Kachel who announced his intention to decline public office.

On-line resources

FVAP News Releases & VIN Now Available on the Web

Electronic versions of news releases and the *Voting Information News* newsletter, disseminated by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), are now available from the FVAP's site on the World Wide Web at **www.fvap.gov**. The icon, shown below, has been added to facilitate access to this important information.



The FVAP Web site provides an alternative venue for obtaining important information on the absentee voting process for the more than six million citizens covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*-- members of the Uniformed Services, the merchant marine, and their family members, and all U.S. citizens overseas.

In addition to news releases and the newsletter, site visitors will find state-by-state instructions

www.fvap.gov
vote@fvap.gov

for completing the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) request for registration and ballot as well as other valuable sources of information. In the near future, the site will also provide access to the 1998-99 edition of the *Voting Assistance Guide*. Hard copies of the *Guide* will be distributed in October (see pg. 2).

Citizens can also e-mail the FVAP directly and contact other voting-related organizations from the site.

Feel the Power . . . VOTE!

State Department: Office of American Citizens Services

Voting Action Officer: Mr. Patrick Hegerty **tel:** (202) 647-6060 **tel FTS:** 8-647-4994, **fax:** (202) 647-6201

Service Voting Action Officers

Dept. of the Army: Mr. Tom Feazell **tel:** (703) 325-4530 **tel DSN:** 221-4530, **fax:** (703) 325-4532, **fax DSN:** 221-4532
E-mail: feazellt@hoffman-emhl.army.mil

Dept. of the Navy: Lt. Stephanie Nordhoff **tel:** (703) 693-0816, **toll-free** (800) 368-5056 **tel DSN** 223-0816,
fax (703) 693-6471, **E-mail:** p662c2@bupers.navy.mil

Dept. of the Air Force: Mr. John Lowrance **tel:** (210) 652-7849, **toll-free** (800) 558-1404 **tel DSN:** 487-7849,
DSN fax 487-5982, **Commercial fax** (210) 652-5982 **E-mail:** lowrancj@hq.afpc.af.mil

Marine Corps: GySgt Elijah Kinton **tel:** (703) 696-2026 **tel DSN:** 426-2026, **fax:** (703) 696-2068, **fax DSN:** 426-2068
E-mail: kinton_jre@hqi.usmc.mil

U.S. Coast Guard: LCDR Reggie Sealey **tel:** (202) 267-2239, **fax:** (202) 267-4823
E-mail: rsealy@comdt.uscg.mil

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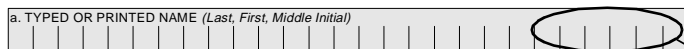
Survey Question: What were the most frequent problems encountered in processing the FPCA?

FPCA Processing Problem	% reporting problem in '92	% reporting problem in '94	% reporting problem in '96	% Change
Writing Illegible	25%	25%	18%	↓ 28%
Failure to indicate party preference	23	27	19	↓ 30%
Mailing address inadequate or illegible	33	31	25	↓ 19%

(Survey, from pg. 1) encountered problems when processing the FPCA. The numbers shown on the table correspond to the percentage of LEOs that encountered that particular problem.

To address the problem of illegibility of forms, character-separation guides

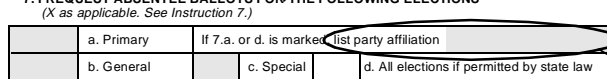
Character-separation guides were added to the '95 version to enhance legibility.



as shown above, were added to the 1995 version of the FPCA to encourage applicants to print a single, legible letter per block. As the table above indicates, this format change contributed significantly to facilitating the processing of this form by LEOs, including the critical

area of legibility of the applicant's mailing address, where the absentee ballot is sent.

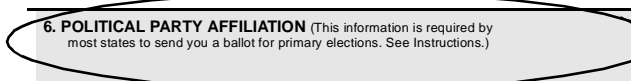
1995 Version of the FPCA, Item 7



Blank for party affiliation was often overlooked by applicants wishing to vote in primary elections.

Failure to provide party affiliation was another problem factor reported by LEOs. The 1995 version of the FPCA addressed this problem by making this item more prominent on the form. By creating a more visible area for this information, required in most states to participate in primary elections, the number of LEOs reporting this problem decreased by 30% from 1994 to 1996.

1995 Version of the FPCA, Item 6



Separate block for party affiliation makes item harder to miss.

These format changes to the FPCA, based on feedback from previous surveys, made a considerable difference in terms of facilitating the absentee voting process for LEOs and UOCAVA citizens alike in the '96 election cycle. The FVAP wishes to thank all random survey recipients who completed and returned the questionnaire for helping us improve the process for all.

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Washington, DC 20301-1155



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